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ABSTRACT

Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University from 1869 to 1909, has been credited by educational historians with either the conception of the junior high school or the inspiration behind the junior high school movement. This study largely used only primary sources and secondary sources from the period before or during the emergence of the junior high school, and not those dating after the fact. An examination of those sources reveals that Eliot did not envision the junior high school academic structure, nor was he concerned with the developmental needs of preadolescents. Additional sources refute the notion that the development of junior high schools warrants the term "movement" at all. Eliot's role as the founder of the junior high school movement has been inaccurately defined in educational literature, and while educational historians have found it convenient to label the establishment of junior high schools as a "movement," there is no evidence that educators deliberately and rationally sought pedagogical changes for the benefit of preadolescents. Twenty-four endnotes and a bibliography are included. (NL)

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Perspectives on the Development of the American Junior High School

Presented to the
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Abstract

Perspectives on the Development of the American Junior High School

A review of the educational literature from the 1920s through the 1980s on the topic of the development of the American junior high school reveals a widely held interpretation of history that Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University from 1869 to 1909, was significantly involved in that development. A preponderance of twentieth century educational historians has credited Eliot with either the conception of the junior high school or the inspiration behind a so-called junior high school movement. Finding that many historians have frequently cited the research and interpretations of their predecessors, the author chose to limit himself, to the greatest extent possible, to primary, and if necessary, secondary sources of the years before and during the emergence of the junior high school, not sources dating from after the fact. A careful examination of these original sources strongly suggests that Eliot never envisioned the junior high school academic structure, nor was he ever concerned with the developmental needs of preadolescents, leading to the conclusion that, far from conceiving or inspiring this level of education, Eliot's role has been inaccurately defined in educational literature. Additional primary and secondary contemporary sources further refute the commonly published notion that the development of junior high schools warrants the term "movement" at all, if a movement is understood to be a series of organized activities working toward a goal.

Our Aristotelian heritage seems, at times, to exert an influence on twentieth century educational historians far broader than the influence originally intended toward Aristotle's contemporaries. We tend to paraphrase the Poetics thusly, "Since a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end, a well written historical research paper should not start just anywhere." Accordingly, each major historical educational trend must have a beginning which can be identified as the commencement of a clearly defined educational movement. The junior high school "movement" in America has proven to be no exception. Despite the fact that no such movement existed in the late nineteenth century under this or any other appellation, Charles W. Eliot, then president of Harvard University, has been overwhelmingly deemed the father of the "movement" by historians throughout the twentieth century. This paper will critically examine this so-called beginning of what subsequently became known as the junior high school movement and will demonstrate that not only have historians erred in crediting Eliot with participation, but also that the use of the word "movement" in the sense of a series of organized activities working toward a goal is a gross misapplication of the term.

To understand how Eliot's name ever became associated with the idea of a junior high school, a concept developed independently of his educational expertise, it is necessary to consider his station in life. As president of prestigeous Harvard from 1869 to 1909, Eliot automatically commanded an audience, if not a following, whenever he chose to speak out on an educational issue. Eliot commanded an even larger and more divergent audience in print. As late as 1919, the Bureau of Education could list only nine nineteenth century periodicals "devoted to higher education or studies of educational problems,"[1] including American Annals of Education, School Review, and Educational Review. It is little surprise, then, that in addition to the latter two, Eliot wrote for general interest magazines such as Arena,

Atlantic Monthly, Century Magazine, and Outlook, each a willing purveyor of Eliot's educational articles, but with readerships larger than that of academia. Still other general interest periodicals, such as The Dial, reviewed the words of Eliot.

The educational issue which eventually linked Eliot's name with the creation of junior high schools was the rising average age of students admitted to Harvard. In the Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College for 1872-73, Eliot noted that "that age has gradually risen until it is now a little over eighteen years, and the College Faculty, thinking that age to be high enough, do not wish to require for admission anything more than a boy of fair capacity and industry may reasonably be expected to have learned."[2] Accordingly, E. W. Gurney, then Dean of the College Faculty, prepared a report on future changes in the requirements for admission, changes which generally stressed increased quality of secondary preparation and decreased quantity.

Among other college prerequisites effective in 1874, "the Catiline of Sallust is substituted for the last three books of Caesar's Gallic War; four thousand lines of Ovid for the Georgics and last six books of the Aeneid of Virgil; and Cicero's Cato Major for two of his Orations" (ibid., 47). In 1876, candidates for admission would be required to pass only one examination among three areas of Elementary Science. Gurney further reported that in order to avoid demands "upon candidates for admission which would cause students to begin their college studies at an average age above eighteen . . . it has been decided to allow students who propose to enter Harvard College to divide the admission examination in 1874 and thereafter into two examinations, separated by an interval of not less than an academic year" (ibid., 51). This admission modification would enable secondary students to focus their last year of studies on those academic areas tested in the second half of the admission examination. Nevertheless, the average age of admission rose from "about two fifths of the

Freshmen . . . over nineteen at entrance"[3] in 1885 to eighteen years and ten months for all freshmen by 1888.[4]

While Eliot, Gurney, and the faculty's reaction to the rising average age of entering freshmen is clear, the justification for their reaction is not. Nowhere in the Annual Report of 1872-73 was a pedagogical reason given for maintaining the average age of admission at eighteen years. Indeed, it was not until 1888 in an address to the Department of Superintendence of the (then) National Educational Association that Eliot elaborated, "The average college graduate who fits himself well for any one of the learned professions, including teaching, can hardly begin to support himself before he is twenty-seven years old" (ibid., 152). Eliot's sole explanation for the inappropriateness of beginning and ending college at an older age was that such a circumstance was "hardly matched in the oldest and most densely peopled countries of Europe" (ibid., 152).

Eliot scarcely elaborated on his concern when, in the Annual Report of 1888-89, he wrote, "Wherever the fault, and whatever the remedy, it is clear that the degree of Bachelor of Arts is taken in the United States later than in any other country in which the degree is used, and too late for the best interests of the individuals who aspire to it, and of the institutions which confer it."[5] One can only wonder about the precise nature of those best interests sacrificed by student and college alike.

Regardless of the merits of Eliot's concern over the average age of admission, it was precisely this concern which prompted him to address the Department of Superintendence in the first place. Eliot spoke on the question "Can School Programmes Be Shortened and Enriched?" and insisted that secondary schools were already teaching a full four years of work, "so full that hardly any suggestion can be made for compacting or abbreviating it" (Eliot, Educational Reform Essays, 155), and full because the secondary schools "have to make good

the deficiencies of the lower schools" (ibid., 155). In calling for the average age of admission to college to be reduced to eighteen in order to "save about a year" (ibid., 153), Eliot implied that this "lost" year would have to be removed from the elementary school years.

Continuing his address, Eliot proceeded to indict elementary schools for requiring an accuracy of knowledge neither possessed nor needed by well educated adults, for seeking to teach to mastery levels which adults do not obtain, and for holding back in lower grades students who have not demonstrated these mandated levels of expertise. Aside from these vague guidelines, Eliot offered no specific plan of action from which it would be clear exactly when the "lost" year would be avoided. Rather, he concluded his address with the confidence that "the professional experience and zeal of superintendents and teachers will know how to devise and execute appropriate measures of relief and improvement" (ibid., 170).

The aforementioned speech, which has been widely cited as the beginning of a junior high school movement, merely represented Eliot's latest approach to his already fifteen year preoccupation with reducing the entering and graduating ages of college students. Even though he criticized public elementary schools, the vast majority of which at that time included preadolescents, two years later in 1890 Eliot provided additional evidence that he did not expect his collegiate concern to benefit simultaneously these students who would later be grouped within the junior high school. In a second address before the Department of Superintendence, he focused on the four year course of secondary school study and lamented that in Massachusetts "not one-tenth of the schools called high habitually maintain a course of study which enables the pupil to prepare himself for admission to Harvard College."[6] In calling for both improved state standards for secondary education and uniform college admission requirements, Eliot continued to demonstrate his self-serving interest behind

his proposals for change in public education.

In his second address, Eliot demonstrated that he was not even above being inconsistent in his proclamations, just so each one furthered the attainment of his goal. His criticism of over nine-tenths of Massachusetts' high school courses of study had been quite absent when, one year earlier, he had received faculty approval to write a letter "to parents and teachers of boys who intend to enter Harvard College," writing in part that "the Faculty believes that boys who have regularly attended a good school ought to be fully prepared to enter with profit upon their college course by the time they are eighteen years old, or even before that age."[7] Presumably the state of secondary education in Massachusetts had not significantly deteriorated during the following twelve months.

Two years later in 1892, Eliot addressed the Department of Superintendence for a third time. Surely he viewed with dismay Harvard's average age of entering freshmen now at about nineteen years (ibid., 8), for he once again returned to his call to shorten and enrich the elementary school years. This time he was prepared to offer some specific proposals, but not of his own. Rather, he reported the Association of Colleges in New England's call for the introduction of natural history, physics, algebra, and foreign languages according to specific methodology during specific years of elementary school (Eliot, Educational Reform Essays, 258). Eliot himself still spoke vaguely about how "the number of grades may be reduced from ten to nine, or from nine to eight, so that the combined primary- and grammar-school periods shall end at fourteen or thirteen; or . . . the studies of the present course may be reduced in volume, or in variety, or in both, so that there shall be room for the introduction of new subjects" (ibid., 253).

Had Eliot carefully considered the full implications of the Association

of Colleges in New England's proposals, he might have refrained from reporting them in the context of shortening the elementary school course of study. He clearly overlooked the inconsistency of reducing present elementary course work, adding new secondary course work, and expecting elementary school to end one year earlier. Perhaps he expected to find two years of "waste" at the elementary level, one of which would be replaced with new subjects and the other of which would no longer be taught, thereby facilitating the commencement of high school one year earlier. In any event, as nationally visible as was the president of Harvard, by not submitting to educators a cohesive, unified plan for reform, he could not generate a national debate effecting real change in the public schools, regardless of his motive.

However, when at the same conference attended by the Department of Superintendence in 1892, the National Educational Association decided that "certain conferences by departments of instruction of teachers in colleges and secondary schools are desirable,"[8] Eliot was appointed chairman of a national education committee. Eliot's name, to the exclusion of his self-serving goal, would soon be known to even more people nationwide. In order to understand why this committee was created, it is necessary to return one year to the National Educational Association (NEA) Conference of 1891.

During that Conference, the Committee on Secondary Education of the National Council of Education presented a report on the need for state and national uniformity in requirements for college admission. Included among the Committee's recommendations were the general adoption of a secondary classical preparatory course, the development of a plan which would insure that secondary courses be college preparatory and that college courses build on those secondary courses, and the appointment by the National Council of Education of a committee to further investigate such concerns.[9] This next committee included Eliot, and its recommendation for a national committee was approved

and funded by the NEA the following year, with Eliot as chairman. This newest committee was called the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies.

The defined purpose of the Committee of Ten was to "hold a conference of school and college teachers of each principal subject which enters into the programmes of secondary schools in the United States and into the requirements for admission to college . . . each conference to consider the proper limits of its subjects, the best methods of instruction, the most desirable allotment of time for the subject, and the best methods of testing the pupils' attainments therein . . ."[10] By focusing, in part, on "the most desirable allotment of time" for each secondary discipline, Eliot and his fellow committee members now had an ideal national forum for discussing the practical implications of introducing secondary subjects during the elementary years, should such introductions be warranted. Eliot's committee could possibly influence elementary school structure, where he placed the blame for Harvard's rising average entering freshman's age, by justifying a restructuring of secondary education. The first question which his committee directed to each discipline's conference was, "In the school course of study extending approximately from the age of six years to eighteen years -- a course including the periods of both elementary and secondary instruction -- at what age should the study which is the subject of the Conference be first introduced?" (ibid., 6).

The Committee of Ten issued its over two hundred page Report in December 1893. Perhaps the sheer size of the report intimidated all but the most dedicated of educators, for in the summary of findings preceding the nine actual conference reports by discipline, Eliot and his committee unhesitatingly reached conclusions unsupported by those very conference reports, but conclusions nonetheless accepted and propounded by journals and magazines. For instance, the Committee stated that "anyone who reads these nine reports consecutively will be struck with the fact that all these bodies of experts desire to have

the elements of their several subjects taught earlier than they are now" (ibid., 14). Moreover, "in the opinion of the Committee, several subjects now reserved for high schools, -- such as algebra, geometry, natural science, and foreign languages, -- should be begun earlier than now, and therefore within the schools classified as elementary; or, as an alternative, the secondary school period should be made to begin two years earlier than at present, leaving six years instead of eight for the elementary school period" (ibid., 45).

Before examining the actual content of the nine reports, two excerpts from major periodicals are illustrative of the acceptance of the Committee's overgeneralizations. In January 1894, an editorial in The Dial, a semimonthly Chicago journal of literary criticism and general interest, pronounced, "By far the most striking feature of these reports is the unanimity with which their main conclusions were reached."[11] In March 1894, School Review, a secondary education journal included in the previously mentioned Bureau of Education's list, published a review of the Report, stating that "nothing in this document seems . . . more important than the conviction suggested and enforced by the conferences and the Committee of Ten, that the high school period should be begun two years sooner."[12]

Far from recommending the commencement of algebra in elementary school, the Conference on Mathematics held that "the course in arithmetic thus mapped out should begin about the age of six years, and be completed at the end of the grammar school course, say about the thirteenth year of age" (NEA, Report of the Committee of Ten, 105). Further, "the systematic study of algebra should not begin until the completion of the course in arithmetic . . ." (ibid., 106). What the conference actually proposed was that some familiarity with algebra be acquired in connection with arithmetic. The conference did recommend, however, "that a course of instruction in concrete geometry . . . be introduced into the grammar school" (ibid., 106).

In calling for the inclusion of natural science in elementary school, the Committee of Ten merged the findings of two distinct conferences: Natural History, including Anatomy, Botony, Zoology, and Physiology; and Physics, Chemistry, and Astronomy. The former conference recommended that only Botony and Zoology be introduced in elementary school. The latter conference recommended that only "the study of simple natural phenomena be introduced into elementary schools . . ." (ibid., 117). Of more significance is the latter conference's proposal that "wherever possible, special science teachers or superintendents be appointed to instruct the teachers of elementary schools in methods of teaching natural phenomena" (ibid., 117). Here, then, was an early call for specialization of instruction during the elementary years, suggestive of the departmentalization of the future junior high schools, yet attributable to neither Eliot nor his committee.

In addressing foreign languages, the Committee of Ten allowed the findings of two separate conferences to stand for three. The Conference on Modern Languages was most explicit in finding that "children should, if possible, begin their study of German or French by the time they are ten years old" (ibid., 96). The Conference on Latin held that "education below the high school should be so organized that students may be prepared to enter upon that course at least a year earlier than, in most places, they do now" (ibid., 174). However, the Conference on Greek made no such proposal as those above for starting the study of Greek at an earlier age. Interestingly, the Conference on Greek was the only conference to echo Eliot by desiring that "the average age at which pupils now enter college be lowered . . ." (ibid., 76).

Of the final three reports, the Conference on Geography stated only that "divisions of the subject through several grades of our schools can best be left to the judgment and discretion of those who have immediate charge of them" (ibid., 209). While the Conference on History, Civil Government, and

Political Economy and the Conference on English presented programs of study for grades one through eight, neither indicated which, if any, program components would be new to the elementary level. What significantly differentiated these latter two conferences from the preceding seven was that first, an alternative plan was also proposed for History, Civil Government, and Political Economy ending with grade six, and second, a finding was made that "English work during the last two years of grammar school course . . . should be in the hands of a special teacher or teachers" (ibid., 90). Members of these latter two conferences foresaw a modification of grades seven and eight, future junior high school years, without calling for the introduction of specific secondary curricula at the elementary level.

In light of a careful analysis of the nine conferences' proposals, it is clear that Eliot and the Committee of Ten erred in claiming that "all these bodies of experts desire to have the elements of their several subjects taught earlier than they are now." An accurate appraisal of the reports as a whole would have indicated that some disciplines called for the introduction of some elements of their subjects at an earlier level. In addition, some aspects of the elementary school might be modified through the hiring of special teachers, the additional training of regular teachers, and the ending of certain study programs at the sixth grade.

While such proposals subsequently proved compatible with the concept of a junior high school, in no way did such modifications call for a new, individual school structure between the elementary and the secondary years. At most, the Committee of Ten simply acknowledged and some periodicals encouraged the possibility of high school commencing two years earlier. Eliot's name was now associated with a national discussion about restructuring the elementary and secondary school years, yet this restructuring did not specifically address Eliot's personal goal of reducing the average age of entering freshmen at

Harvard. The idea of four year high schools commencing two years earlier shortly became synonymous with six year high schools, not five.

The next major committee funded by the NEA was appointed by the Department of Superintendence in 1893. Addressing, in part, the now timely topic of whether the elementary course should "be eight years and the secondary course four years . . . or, should the elementary course be six years and the secondary course six years,"[13] the Committee of Fifteen on Elementary Education issued a report in 1895 which recommended retaining eight years of elementary school, and, unlike the Report of the Committee of Ten, gave specific justifications for its recommendation.

The Sub-Committee on the Correlation of Studies in Elementary Education stated that "elementary school work should not be reduced from eight years," but rather that "in the seventh and eighth years a modified form of algebra be introduced in place of advanced arithmetic, and that in the eighth year English grammar yield place to Latin," in order to aid the transition from elementary to secondary school (ibid., 95). B. C. Gregory, a supervising principal, wrote that "ordinarily I should regard the termination of the elementary course at any given point as a matter purely of convenience, were it not for the question of departmental teaching" (ibid., 165-66), to which he was opposed, in part, on the grounds that elementary school children need varying amounts of instruction in each discipline, a correlation of studies, and constant and consistent moral development. William A. Mowry, another educator, stated that a small percentage of elementary school graduates went on to high school and so warned that "if the elementary course nominally ended two years earlier, it is apparently certain that a large number of those who manage to complete the eight or nine years' course would end their school days with the completion of the elementary course at the end of six years, thereby losing two valuable years of important school work" (ibid., 191).

Had Eliot and the Committee of Ten made an honest appraisal of the elementary school modifications proposed by its own conferences, that committee's summary of findings would have contained some striking similarities to those proposals contained the the Report of the Committee of Fifteen. The conference and subcommittee recommendations in both reports did not so much concern the issue of six year high schools vs. four year high schools as they did ways of making a smoother transition from elementary school to high school during grades seven and eight. For instance, the Committee of Ten's Conference on Latin had recommended that Latin begin one year sooner, and the Committee of Fifteen's Sub-Committee on the Correlation of Studies concurred. The Conference on English had noted the need for specialist teachers in grades seven and eight, and the Sub-Committee on the Correlation of Studies agreed with these two grades' being the lowest in which to introduce such teachers. The Conference on Physics, Chemistry, and Astronomy had suggested additional instruction for elementary school teachers in order to promote specialization of teaching methods. However, rather than acknowledge the similarities between the two reports, the NEA itself sought to maintain the momentum of the Committee of Ten's overgeneralizations, already accepted and espoused by periodicals.

In a quite misleading manner, the recording secretary noted in the minutes of the 1895 NEA Journal of Proceedings and Addresses that William Carey Jones of the University of California at Berkeley "read a paper on the subject, 'What Action Ought to Be Taken by Universities and Secondary Schools to Promote the Introduction of the Programs Recommended by the Committee of Ten'" and that a "committee was appointed to report a plan of action on the basis of Professor Jones' paper."[14] Jones' six page paper was in fact titled "The Prospects for a Federal Educational Union," and it referred to the Committee of Ten only twice. The first instance merely noted the national interest in restructuring courses of study. "Either independently of the report of the committee of ten, or in

discussion and execution of its recommendations, much is being done in various parts of the country to bring about co-operation within limited circles" (ibid., 598). What Jones actually addressed in his paper was his perceived need to "establish an inter-collegiate policy on the subject of entrance requirements" for colleges and universities (ibid., 599). In this context, then, Jones made his second and final reference to the Committee of Ten by suggesting that "to effect such a policy . . . the programs of the committee of ten, . . . with suitable and various redistribution of subjects be, so far as they go, indorsed by the universities and adopted by the high schools of the country; that the universities hold examinations in, or accredit on, all the subjects included in these programs" (ibid., 599).

Jones saw the Committee of Ten's recommendations as one means to arrive eventually at national uniformity in college entrance examinations and so did not seek the appointment of a committee "to promote the introduction" of those recommendations as the NEA minutes state. Rather, he requested a committee for "promoting a federation of our educational institutions," as well as for carrying out all of his paper's suggestions (ibid., 599). The resulting committee was appropriately named the Committee on Uniformity of Requirements for College Admission, but its name was subsequently shortened to the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements.

Although its final report was four years in the making, the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements formally reconfirmed its assignment from the NEA by placing in the NEA's 1896 minutes the declaration that "it is within the province of the Committee, according to the resolution passed at the Denver meeting, to investigate existing college-entrance requirements and to report on ways and means of securing such uniformity in extent and method as will be conducive to the best interests both of higher and of secondary education."[15] Nonetheless, when the final report was issued in 1899, a resolution, scarcely

within the province of the Committee and only marginally related to the findings of the actual subcommittees, was included, namely, "that we favor a unified six-year high-school course of study beginning with the seventh grade."[16] The first criticism of this resolution, that a prescribed college preparatory curriculum for grades seven and eight does not necessarily presuppose a six year high school, is easily acknowledged. The second criticism, that the resolution is another example of a national committee unhesitatingly reaching a conclusion unsupported by its own subcommittees, requires an examination of the subcommittee reports.

Beginning with the academic year 1896-97, each subcommittee was directed to determine what should "constitute a year's work in each subject . . . or, as may be preferable in some groups, what should constitute the 'elementary' and what the 'advanced' requirements, and, in general, the constitution of entire courses of study in the separate subjects" (NEA, Journal of Proceedings 1896, 558). In the absence of other evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that had the subcommittees favored "a unified six-year high-school course of study beginning with the seventh grade," they would have defined six years of study in each discipline.

The subcommittee on English presented its comprehensive program of secondary study for only a four year period. No mention, either direct or indirect, was made of seventh and eighth grade preparation. The subcommittee on History, Civics, and Economics chose only to endorse and append the three and four year courses of history recommended by the American Historical Association in 1898. The subcommittee on Foreign Languages and Literature appended two reports. One was a five year old extract from the proceedings of the American Philological Association, in which it was recommended that Latin, but not Greek, be introduced in grammar school, not in a secondary school extending down two years. The other report was by the Modern Language Association of America, in which it was stated that "if a foreign langauge is taken up in the primary

grades, it should be as an optional study" (NEA, Journal of Proceedings 1899, 727).

Of more interest are the reports of the subcommittees on Sciences and Mathematics. The former subcommittee also defined its own four year program of study, but elaborated that nature study should "be made an integral part of the school work preceding the high-school period" (ibid., 651). A further appended comment that "nature study is hard to define" (ibid., 779) did little to clarify the subcommittee's recommendation for the seventh, the eighth, or any elementary grade. Nevertheless, the subcommittee on Sciences boldly stated that "it is important that the last two grades that now precede the high-school should be incorporated in it, and wherever practicable, the instruction of those two grades should be given under the supervision of the high-school teacher" (ibid., 652). Clearly nothing in the subcommittee's report supported such a declaration.

Only the latter subcommittee on Mathematics submitted a complete six year course of study. Expanding on the proposals of the Committee of Ten's Conference on Mathematics, this subcommittee recommended the introduction of both algebra and geometry in the seventh and eighth grades. Yet this subcommittee, like its predecessor, made no statement to the effect that the secondary school should be responsible for these two additional years of advanced study.

What is significant about the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements' resolution in favor of six year high schools is not that the Committee over-generalized the findings or the implications of its subcommittees' reports. Rather, the Report teems with evidence that had the subcommittee members put more effort into their formally assigned tasks and used their four years of preparation time more efficiently, they might have produced reports in full support of the Committee's resolution. On one hand, merely endorsing and appending the work of other organizations should have been unacceptable. The fact that no reports were submitted as requested in the secondary disciplines

of astronomy, geology, and physiology needs no further comment. On the other hand, the reports on English, Sciences, and Mathematics are models which could have been followed by each discipline, with the requirement that each year from seventh through twelfth be specifically addressed in terms of both course content and rationale for that content in any particular grade. An entire six year program across the curriculum could then have been evaluated by the Committee and subsequently by secondary educators, in terms of the program's viability and merit within a six year high school.

Such a content-oriented approach would have still precluded the concept of a separate junior high school organization, the alternative being an eight year elementary school with some form of departmentalized seventh and eighth grades, were it not for a remarkable feature within the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements' explanation for its six year high school resolution. Albeit with no basis from any subcommittee report, the Committee wrote partially in terms of child development, a new field of attempted scientific inquiry in the 1890s. "The seventh grade, rather than the ninth, is the natural turning-point in the pupil's life, as the age of adolescence demands new methods and wiser direction." Further, "the seventh-grade pupil, if thought necessary, could still be taught and given individual attention by one teacher in all but one or two subjects which require the services of specialists" (ibid., 659).

This combination, then, of child development orientation and a clearly delineated six year secondary program might have resulted in an original proposal and justification for junior high schools. But with the omission of the latter ingredient, the former made little impact on either other educators' calls for the restructuring of schools, or on the actual restructuring which began to take place after the turn of the century. Before examining the nature of these proposals and modified schools, it will be informative to return to Charles W. Eliot one last time.

Nearly thirty years after his first pronouncement in the annual Harvard Reports, Eliot had not yet abandoned his quest for lower ages for graduating students. Inasmuch as he had been unable to enroll younger students in Harvard, he had begun supporting, as early as 1887, a reduction in the undergraduate course load from eighteen and four-tenths courses to sixteen.[17] This proposal was rejected by the school's Board of Overseers, with Eliot alone supporting it, but during the next decade, various partial courses were abolished, each time with the net effect of reducing the undergraduate course load. When, in 1901, the Board expressed an interest in a formal "system by which students of unusual diligence or marked mental capacity may obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts in three years" (ibid., 27), the faculty, no doubt under Eliot's leadership, quickly "abandoned the practice of requiring a candidate who accomplished the work for the degree in three years either to attain higher grades . . . or to wait for his degree on leave of absence . . ." (ibid., 27). Finally, and without specific approval from the Board of Overseers, Eliot had one effective way to reduce the age at which at least some students graduated.

Granted, then, that Charles W. Eliot never addressed the academic or developmental needs of preadolescents for their own sakes and certainly never envisioned a junior high school, it is clear that the impetus for a change in the structure of public education was sparked by the nationally reported over-generalizations and unjustified conclusions of the reports of the Committee of Ten and the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements. Inasmuch as neither report presented a complete curricular and methodological plan for restructuring elementary and high schools, it is little wonder that regional and individual educators began propounding their own proposals for the implementation of a new public school structure.

For instance, in 1902, George D. Pettee, principal of the University

School in Cleveland, chaired "a committee to report on an extended high school curriculum,"[18] the report subsequently being presented at an academic conference at Western Reserve University. The Pettee Committee differentiated both elementary and secondary schools into lower and upper grades, that is, 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9, 10-12, respectively. Lower high school was to be characterized by "general studies, aiming at the true appreciation of nature, men, and books," as well as having the "major half of curriculum devoted to facts rather than to forms" (ibid., 109). Upper high school would be characterized by college preparatory courses, studies "in more technical form," and "processes more exhaustive" (ibid., 109).

F. Louis Soldan, a superintendent from Missouri, published an article titled "Shortening the Years of Elementary Schooling" in The School Review in 1903.[19] He stated that "while there are good reasons against a transfer of the two highest grades of the elementary school course to the high schools, and against its incidental reduction to six years, the shortening of the time to seven years deserves more favorable consideration" (ibid., 10). He echoed the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements' concern about child development when he added that "such a course would cover the ages from six to thirteen, and would represent a fairly well-defined period in the child's physical and mental life. Its termination would correspond approximately with the time of transition from childhood to youth, with all the changes in the physiological organization that this implies" (ibid., 10). Nonetheless, his proposal neither called nor allowed for a separate junior high school structure to address the transition from childhood to adolescence.

One additional example of an individual proposal should suffice. In 1904, Professor L. A. Ostien of Utah's Agricultural College wrote in Education that the public school course should end after eleven years for those students going on to higher education. He agreed with Soldan that elementary school

should end after the seventh grade, but he was further convinced that students could "do first year work in algebra, Latin, and modern languages in their eighth year in school,"[20] thereby moving each traditional course of high school study down one year, with the result of students' being able to graduate from high school one year earlier.

While it would take approximately five more years of public debate, both among individual educators and members of new national committees such as the NEA's Committee on an Equal Division of the Twelve Years in the Public Schools Between the District and the High Schools in 1905 and the NEA's Committee on Six-Year Course of Study in 1908, before administrators of public schools would actually begin implementing any of the numerous proposals for structural change, Ostien focused on what proved to be an actual reason for restructuring the schools. He stated that "in many cities the change could be made without additional room for the high school; in many others it might mean utilizing more closely the high school building; and . . . in many cities of from 3,000 to 12,000 people, all or a portion of the eighth grade pupils are housed and taught in the high school building; in such cities the only change would be in special instructors in the various subjects instead of a teacher in charge of a room teaching all the subjects of the grade" (ibid., 622-23). Obviously, Ostien was emphasizing economic reasons compatible with change.

Had there been, even as late as the first ten years of the twentieth century, a junior high school movement in any structured, organized, and methodological sense of the term, subsequent historians would have experienced little or no difficulty in identifying the first junior high school in America. On the contrary, no such identification can be made, although a review of early reorganized schools confirms Ostien's economic concern. Frank Bunker, Superintendent of the Public Schools of Berkeley, presented a report to the Board of Education in 1909. He recommended that elementary school comprise the first

six grades, an "Introductory High School group" comprise the next three grades, and high school comprise the last three grades.[21] It is significant to note that, writing approximately a quarter of a century later, Bunker described his report as "the first step in changing the school system of the city to the junior high school organization" (ibid., 1), whereas in 1909 he had found it necessary to coin the label Introductory High School, indicating the absence of a national reorganizational effort. Of greater significance in substantiating this absence is Bunker's reason for issuing his report, namely "the need for providing class-rooms in sufficient number to meet the prospective growth of the High School" (ibid., 2). Bunker stated that in order "to obviate the necessity of rebonding the city . . . it would mean that four hundred pupils would be taken from the high school and distributed among the centers, thus leaving a capacity margin in the High School Proper sufficient to care for the natural growth of the school for a number of years . . ." (ibid., 2-3). The aforementioned "centers" were, in actuality, schools for seventh, eighth, and ninth graders.

While it would be clearly inappropriate to attribute Bunker and Ostien's economic considerations to all reorganization plans of the next decade, Thomas H. Briggs, Commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Education from 1914 to 1919, published the results of 266 responding junior high schools addressing on a questionnaire "the chief reason . . . for their establishment."[22] According to Briggs, 22% were established "to provide educational opportunity," 14% "to relieve congestion," 10% "to utilize old high-school building," 8% because they were "better for grades 7, 8, 9," 7% "to increase retention," 6% each "for earlier differentiation" and "to bridge the gap between elementary and high school," and 4% "to introduce prevocational work earlier" (ibid., 34). The remaining 23% responded among twenty-seven additional categories. Although there is no concensus as to how many junior high schools were then in existence,

the responding sample size would seem to be adequate. Briggs reported at least 377 out of a possible 800 in 1917 on page 60, while the U.S. Department of the Interior reported 557 in 1918.[23] In any event, Briggs wisely cautioned that the reported reasons for establishment "overlap, and that in many cases they are probably the expression of a hope rather than the reflection of a clearly conceived program" (ibid., 35), but even without his caution, reasons serving the developmental needs of preadolescents accounted for no more than half of all categories given. Ironically, Briggs further found that 85% of these junior high schools were chiefly influenced in their establishment by superintendents of schools (ibid., 35), the very same classification of educators before whom Eliot had spoken in 1888, 1890, and 1892.

The existence of conflicting figures for the number of junior high schools should come as no surprise. Since there was no one definition of exactly what constituted a junior high, any statistician's figures would necessarily be influenced by his or her working definition. William A. Smith, author of The Junior High School in 1925, cited that the application of the Commissioner of Education's definition for the school year 1913-14 resulted in the classification rejection of 110 or 167 cities which reported having established junior high schools.[24] Nor was it any less difficult to identify the existence of junior highs by the comparatively objective method of examining a school's basis of organization. Smith researched the Commissioner of Education's organizational figures for 669 cities having minimum populations of 8,000 for the school year 1910-11 and reported 180 cities with structures other than 8-4 (ibid., 93), this in a year when, according to Briggs' definition, the number of junior high schools had doubled from only 10 to 20 (ibid., 32).

A reappraisal of primary sources of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries leads one to conclude that it is most inappropriate to associate the terms "junior high school" and "movement" in any meaningful manner. While it

has been convenient, if not a custom, for many educational historians of the twentieth century to label the establishment of junior high schools as a movement, and thereby suggest that educators deliberately and rationally sought pedagogical changes for the benefit of preadolescents, there is clearly a need to correct the record in future histories of American education. Charles W. Eliot was not responsible for the emergence of junior high schools, and the junior high schools themselves were established on a haphazard and, often enough, a poorly conceived basis, their establishment being unworthy, in any positive sense, of the term "movement."

Endnotes

1. U.S., Department of the Interior, Educational Periodicals Devoted to Higher Education or Studies of Educational Problems, Bulletin 1919, No. 28 of the Bureau of Education (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 117.

2. Harvard Reports, Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1872-73 (Cambridge: Welch, Bigelow, and Company, 1874), 10.

3. Harvard Reports, Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1885-86 (Cambridge: University Press, 1887), 9.

4. Charles W. Eliot, Educational Reform Essays and Addresses (New York: Century Company, 1898), 151.

5. Harvard Reports, Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1888-89 (Cambridge: University Press, 1890), 21.

6. Charles W. Eliot, "The Gap Between Common Schools and Colleges," Arena, June 1890, 25.

7. Harvard Reports, Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1889-90 (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), 8-9.

8. National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, Session of the Year 1892, Held at Saratoga Springs, New York (Astor Place, New York: J. J. Little and Company, 1893), 31.

9. National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, Session of the Year 1891, Held at Toronto, Ontario, Canada (Astor Place, New York: J. J. Little and Company, 1891), 316.

10. National Educational Association, Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies with the Reports of the Conferences Arranged by the Committee (New York: American Book Company, 1894), 3.

11. "The Report on Secondary Education," The Dial, January 16, 1894, 35.

12. James C. MacKenzie, "The Report of the Committee of Ten," School Review 2 (March 1894): 149.

13. National Educational Association, Report of the Committee of Fifteen on Elementary Education with the Reports of the Sub-Committees: On the Training of Teachers; on the Correlation of Studies in Elementary Education; on the Organization of City School Systems (New York: American Book Company, 1895), 10.

14. National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, Session of the Year 1895, Held at Denver, Colorado (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Company, 1895), 579.

15. National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-fifth Annual Meeting, Held at Buffalo, N.Y., July 3-10, 1896 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1896), 558.

16. National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-eighth Annual Meeting, Held at Los Angeles, Cal., July 11-14, 1899 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1899), 659.

17. Harvard Reports, Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1901-02 (Cambridge: University Press, 1903), 25.

18. Paul H. Hanus, A Modern School (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905), 100.

19. F. Louis Soldan, "Shortening the Years of Elementary Schooling," School Review 11 (January 1903): 4.

20. L. A. Ostien, "Two High School Reforms," Education 24 (June 1904): 622.

21. Frank Forest Bunker, The Junior High School Movement -- Its Beginnings (Washington, D.C.: W. F. Roberts Company, 1935), 3.

22. Thomas H. Briggs, The Junior High School (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 34.

23. U.S., Department of the Interior, Biennial Survey of Education, 1918-1920, Bulletin 1923, No. 16 of the Bureau of Education (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 32.

24. William A. Smith, The Junior High School (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), 99.

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